

The Brooklyn Paper

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Ratner ups the ante



Says he might add 'mini' arena for kid sports to Netsplex site

By Jotham Sederstrom
The Brooklyn Papers

Developer Bruce Ratner has been floating the notion that he might build a second sports facility for amateur athletics — in addition to a professional basketball arena for the New Jersey Nets, on the site for the proposed Atlantic Yards development.

While it isn't clear whether the facility would be located within the proposed 800-seat, 10,000-seat 800-seat professional basketball arena or elsewhere, amateur athletic groups working closely with Forest City Ratner say they have been told that a 3,000-seat "gym" adjacent to the arena was being considered.

"We have been talking to local sports folks and they've indicated

EXCLUSIVE

"We do very much want to incorporate a larger amateur athletics program overall into the effort," Dallasco added. "And we are certainly open to discussing using the NBA facility for major school sports, etc."

Ratner's Atlantic Yards site stretches east into Prospect Heights from the intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush avenues.

Richard Lipsky, a lobbyist for Ratner who works closely with amateur athletics groups and youth organizations, said that he's met with more than 60 groups to discuss an outreach program sponsored by Forest City Ratner. He said that besides discounted tickets to Nets games and a possibility that the

**NOT JUST NETS
THE NEW BROOKLYN**

would likely only be allowed access on an irregular basis.

At an anti-Ratner rally on Sunday, protesters charged that the developer's plans for the site were environmental. Jones suggested that \$67 million earmarked four years ago for the construction of Sportsplex, an amateur athletic arena planned for Coney Island, could be usurped by Ratner and put toward the Atlantic Yards project under the guise of being used as a facility for amateur sports.

See **RATNER** on page 14

Witnesses sell 360 Furman St.

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is in final negotiations with a buyer who plans to convert part of the hulking, 12-story video and book distribution plant along the Brooklyn Heights waterfront at 360 Furman St. into housing.

Robert Levine, a Manhattan-based developer with amateur theater interests, told

The Brooklyn Papers this week that he was working out the final details to purchase the property, located at the foot of Joralemon Street. He said he would convert at least part of it to residential use.

"We will work with the city and try to realize the best possible project," said Levine, principal owner of RAL Companies & Associates. He declined to further comment on the deal until the contract is signed.

Levin is best known for converting the former Arthur Levin State Office Building, at 260 Broadway at Chambers Street in Lower Manhattan, into a combination of commercial space and residential office. He purchased the 28-story building, which was used by the state for more than 50 years, for \$38 million in 2000.

Ever since the property on Furman Street north of Atlantic Avenue hit the market last June, speculators have wondered what conversion the building might have been born. Levine and his team have planned Brooklyn Bridge Park, a 1.3-mile commercial and recreational development planned for the waterfront between the Manhattan Bridge and Atlantic Avenue.

Atlantic Avenue would serve as a gateway to the park and visitors would have to walk around the Furman Street building to get to most of the park.

See **FURMAN** on page 4



The future is now

By Lisa J. Curtis
GO Brooklyn Editor

Tonight (Saturday, April 3) at 11:30 pm, the New York City Neo-Futurists will perform Michael Cyril Creighton's "Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind" (30 plays in 60 minutes) at the Brooklyn Lyceum in Park Slope.

Each play is written by a Neo-Futurist ensemble member, honed by the troupe, and randomly collaged with 20 other plays through high-energy audience participation. (Each week, two to 12 plays — literally, depending on rolls of the dice — are replaced as ensemble members add new plays to the existing body of work.)

"It's never the same show, even on the same weekend," explained Neo-Futurist ensemble member Michael Cyril Creighton, who made the cut with 10 other members by surviving auditions led by Allen.

The show is a mixture of everything, ranging from ready-to-go comedy to found objects, pieces, even some movement stuff," said Creighton. "It's a hodgepodge of all different kinds of theater."

The scripts are based on the actors' real experiences,

explained Creighton. "We are always seeking from ourselves, not trying to fool the audience," he said. "It's not acting. It's all based in honesty and truth."

"It's an ensemble of 10 women and everyone has very different things to say. It's a living collage of life experiences — a wild, crazy spontaneous night with a variety of performances."

"Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind" has been a Chicago institution since 1988 and came to Manhattan in the mid-1990s for a brief run. Neo-Futurists who might be familiar to Brooklynites include Boerum Hill residents Ayun Halliday, an actress and her husband, Greg Kotis — who won a 2002 Tony for his little project called "Urinetown: The Musical" (which starred another Neo-Futurist, Spencer Kayden).

"Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind" continues every Friday and Saturday night at 11:30 pm at the Brooklyn Lyceum (227 Fourth Ave. at President Street in Park Slope) (718) 670-7234. Doors open at 10:30 pm. Admission: \$10-\$15. Call 718-670-7234 for more information, log onto www.neo-futurists.org.

**GO
BEHIND THE SCENES
PAGE 7**

Cop catches bank bandit

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

A Brooklyn Heights beat officer chased down a suspected bank robber Friday.

Patrolman Brian Karuschat, 27, raced off towards the Independence Community Bank at the corner of Court Street and Atlantic Avenue in Cobble Hill when the call came in about the heist just after 3 pm.

As Karuschat, who is usually assigned to the Cobble Hill area, was running down Court Street, headed towards the scene of the crime in the neighboring 76th Precinct, a call came in over the police radio describing the bandit as a tall, thin, wearing jeans, a dark jacket and white sneakers.

When a man fitting that description ran by Karuschat with the cash, he grabbed him and followed him down Smith Street. The 6-foot-2 Karuschat caught up to the suspect at Baltic Street and slapped him with handcuffs on him before he even had a chance to run.

The suspected bandit had hidden the stolen cash, which he had stashed in a black plastic bag.

The mayhem began just before 3 pm, when David Daniels, 37, of Manhattan, allegedly walked into

See **BANDIT** on page 4



Bay Ridge Irish

Kelly and Madison Mahoney enjoyed Sunday's Bay Ridge St. Patrick's parade along the neighborhood's Fifth Avenue.

Women ready for some football

By Jotham Sederstrom
The Brooklyn Papers

During the workweek she litigates; on weekends, she crushes bones.

Lawyer jokes about Lynn Lewis, the 17-year-old founder and leader of the New York Sharks, professional women's tackle football team, said her two partners said the team is "a hodgepodge of all different kinds of theater."

The team, which spans eight games through June, will give the Sharks a second chance to beat the Sacramento Sirens, who last year defeated Lewis and her teammates 41-30 in the IFLW Championship game, the league's Super Bowl. The loss surprised Lewis, whose team was the defending champion and ended

the regular season undefeated.

"When that game comes, we will win," she said, boldly predicting this season's first meeting between the teams.

The 44-year-old Bay Ridge native and Fort Hamilton High School alum has torpedored the season since she was a kid, when she competed in football with the boys in afternoon games of touch football.

"I'm pretty tough, so it's very aggressive," she said. "And being a lawyer, you gotta be tough, so the two go together, I guess."

Lewis, a Bay Ridge native since 1999, has been involved in it in the Independent Women's Football League (IWF), will strap on the shoulder pads for her first game of the season on Saturday, April 3, when she and the Sharks face the Atlanta Xplorians in Queens.

But Lewis, who shares the field with Veronica Simon, another Bay Ridge native, linebacker and safety, set her eyes on other foes.

The season, which spans eight games

through June, will give the Sharks a second chance to beat the Sacramento Sirens, who last year defeated Lewis and her teammates 41-30 in the IFLW Championship game, the league's Super Bowl. The loss surprised Lewis, whose team was the defending champion and ended



Linebacker Lynn Lewis, of Bay Ridge, at practice on the Fort Hamilton High School athletic field in Bay Ridge Sunday. Lewis plays for the New York Sharks, a women's tackle football team.

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Producer: Marty's a BCAT hog



Borough President Markowitz at last Sunday's St. Patrick's Parade in Bay Ridge. A complaint charges he manipulates BCAT programming.

By Jotham Sederstrom
The Brooklyn Paper

A Brooklyn cable-access television producer has filed a petition with the city's Comptroller's office to force the Borough President — Marty Markowitz — to stop what he's already been doing.

And, apparently, he's already seeing results.

Since the petition was filed against Brooklyn Community Access Television (BCAT) on March 5, six more time slots have been taken by the Markowitz-produced "Everything Brooklyn" show have been pulled from the network, according to a lawyer for Ronin Amano, the cable access producer who filed the complaint.

In the petition, the Public Service Commission, Amano, producer and co-founder of the program "Rent Wars News," accused Markowitz and the publicly funded — and federally mandated — BCAT, of squeezing out tenants from their apartments in order to show more room for more Borough Hall-driven productions.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) oversees utilities and public access television.

"That's like Rudy Giuliani coming into the Brooklyn Museum of Art, ripping up the artwork and fit-

ting the corners," said Amano, referring to the controversy over the "Sensation" exhibit in 2000.

"Don't get me wrong," he said. "This is not an issue of the people under Marty really not understanding how threatening co-opting a program can be."

Through a spokeswoman, Markowitz, a former tenant leader who has twice appeared as a guest on "Rent Wars News," declined to comment.

"It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the judicial process with respect to this matter at this time," said Sharon Toomer, a spokeswoman for Markowitz.

"We feel that the petition is without merit," said BCAT spokesman James Meyers.

James Hillgardner, the Queens-based lawyer representing Amano, said that since January "Everything Brooklyn," a program conceived and produced by Markowitz, had ballooned to eight hours on 16 time slots while shows on other channels were cut to 10 pm on Fridays, were cut to just one half-hour broadcast.

As recently as last year, shows airing Friday through Monday had been broadcast on two of BCAT's four channels, but quarterly programming changes have reduced those broadcasts to one.

"Marty is entitled to a program on the public access channel like everyone else, and if he's doing it with his dime, like everyone else has to, than that's fine," said Hillgardner. "But he's not entitled to 16 times the programming."

According to Amano, petition programs on BCAT are limited to 28 minutes, but "Everything Brooklyn" generally runs about an hour and a half more frequently.

Since the complaint was filed, it has been scaled back to twice a week on Wednesdays, at 11 am and 7 pm.

The program covers goings on in Brooklyn, ranging from a Women's History Month celebration to information about a push to lengthen the borough's first cruise line.

State law and cable regulations prohibit local governments from exercising editorial control over programming on public access channels. State cable regulations require that programming is provided on a non-discriminatory basis, which Hillgardner said likely hasn't happened at BCAT.

The petition, if successful, would benefit shows like "Ghetto-nomics," "Alexandra's Psycho Eye," "1001 Ways to Cope with Stress" and "Talking to My Mom," each suffering from a deci-

tion by BCAT to eliminate "double-slotted" Friday through Monday.

But Meyers countered that they're running the station by the book.

"BCAT's actions have been consistently consistent and in accordance with its programming policies, the franchise agreement between the city and the franchisees, the PSC rules and regulations and federal and state law," said Meyers.

BCAT officials said they could not comment further while the petition was being considered.

Hillgardner is no stranger to filing complaints against public access networks.

Entertainment and spokespersons at Queens Public TV, Manhattan Neighborhood Network and Great Neck's Public Access Television Corporation decided to comment for this article, citing current litigation or complaints filed against them.

In court, pending in the state Court of Appeals against QPTV and MNM, Hillgardner is seeking to reverse lower court decisions and compel the Public Service Commission to turn over records indicating the producer of every show broadcast when they first requested to

be put on the air. In doing so he hopes to show that the networks did not follow a first come, first served policy.

If he is successful he would use that precedent to get BCAT to open up its time slots to get the information from the public in the hopes of proving that Markowitz was given preferential treatment with regards to time slots and airtime.

Hillgardner is representing Amano in his complaint against BCAT pro bono on behalf of the Association of Cable Access Producers.

Since 1992, the publicly funded

BCAT has offered what Hillgar-

ner and others describe as a soapbox to Brooklynites, offering a stage for such malnourished offerings as hip-hop, self-discovery and the perennial presidential candi-

date Lyndon LaRouche.

When "Rent Wars News" pre-

miered in 2000, it aired at 10:30

am and 6:30 pm on Mondays. The show, which is holding court issues faced by tenants and homeowners, most of whom cannot afford their own lawyers.

"I never expected to see Marty

Markowitz," said Amano. "I like him, he's a former tenant activist. But everyone is coming to me and saying, 'your friend is ruining BCAT.'"

Billion dollar suit over Holocaust artwork sales

By William J. Kole

Associated Press

Using a Nazi bank vault as a backdrop, a prominent American lawyer announced Thursday he was filing a \$1 billion lawsuit on behalf of Holocaust victims whose precious artworks were stolen by the Nazis and sold off after World War II.

Edward D. Fagan, a New York-based attorney who represents American banks who are descendants of slaves and for victims of South Africa's apartheid system, said the suit would be filed later Thursday in U.S. District Court in New York.

The suit, brought by a new group calling itself the Association of Holocaust Victims for the Restitu-

tion of Artwork and Masterpieces, calls on two leading Austrian banks, the Austrian government and Sotheby's auction house to return paintings and other works allegedly sold without the permission of their original owners.

"Not one painting has been restored — not one," Fagan said, contending the missing artworks include paintings by Monet, Cezanne, Delacroix and other Impressionist masters. "These victims are suing to recover their property."

The plaintiffs, who were not identified by name, were said to include several dozen families, mostly Jews, from Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, Germany, Israel, Poland, Switzerland, the United States and other countries.

Their suit, alleging "the system-

atic theft of great artwork, masterpieces and collections," seeks between \$100 million and \$1 billion (U.S. currency) in damages if the artworks — valued at between \$2 million and \$5 million (U.S. currency) —

"We would like the paintings back, but the likelihood is not so good," Fagan said.

At a press conference in a Vienna cafe, Fagan showed reporters a sketch of a safe, drawn by an anonymous former employee of Bank Austria-Creditanstalt, purportedly showing the location of a secret vault concealed beneath a trap door that once contained priceless paintings unclaimed after the war.

He then led several dozen journalists on a walk to the bank's near-

by headquarters, where flustered officials agreed to unlock the cellar and open several vaults. None contained anything more than old books and dusty boxes of documents and files.

Not long, Fagan said he never expected to see artworks, which he contended were sold off by Sotheby's and other auction houses with the complicity of Bank Austria-Creditanstalt, Erste Bank and the Austrian government, which he said issued export licenses, allowing the works to leave the country.

The works' rightful owners, he said, were mostly Jews who perished in the Holocaust — the Nazis' extermination of 6 million people.

Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938, one year before

the war began in Europe.

"We are accusing the banks of engaging in the trafficking of stolen Holocaust artwork," Fagan said. "It's not sufficient to say, 'We don't have anything.' A New York court is going to say, 'Well, you've got something,' show me."

The 16-page lawsuit alleges that the banks "developed systems and schemes through which they collected, took title to and/or profited from artwork, while the defendant issued export licenses, allowing the works to leave the country."

The works' rightful owners, he said, were mostly Jews who perished in the Holocaust — the Nazis' extermination of 6 million people.

Bank Austria, which recently merged with Creditanstalt, paid \$45 million (U.S.) in 1999 to settle a lawsuit brought by Fagan on behalf

of Jews whose gold and other financial assets were stolen by the Nazis and allegedly fell into the bank's hands after the war.

Spokesman Peter Thier said the bank was eager to cooperate in any way and allow it does not possess artworks or other valuable assets seized by the Nazis.

He said the bank was working closely with an independent historical commission set up in the mid-1990s to handle claims by victims of the Holocaust.

Oliver Rathkolb, a ranking member of the commission, told the Austria Press Agency there was "no evidence of a connection between art theft" and the bank.

"We have no problem with exposing the truth. We want to be as transparent as possible," Thier said,

Real Answer to Social Promotion

By Randi Weingarten

Social promotion doesn't work. No one knows this better than teachers, particularly those who find themselves in classrooms with children who don't have the basic knowledge and skills they need to do grade-level work. The UFT took an official stance against this practice long before Mayor Giuliani made it an issue, much less Mayor Bloomberg.

But teachers also know that while no politician can easily answer a "get out of jail" retention policy, may score political points for a mayor or chancellor, it doesn't really offer much to the students who are struggling. Making third-graders who didn't get it the first time sit through the same curriculum in the same classroom again has been tried. The evidence is overwhelming that students who are simply held back and not provided with enriched opportunities to learn generally don't make significant academic progress and are at increased risk of dropping out in later years.

"Conditional" 4th grade

There are very concrete, common-sense ways to end social promotion. Early and dramatic intervention, as early as pre-kindergarten, is one approach. Another is the proposal the UFT put forward in response to the Mayor's plan to establish a "gate" for this year's 3rd graders. Under our plan the system would create "conditional" 4th grade classes next year for third-graders who score at Level 1, the lowest range, in reading or math.

Such conditional classes would be capped at 15 students instead of the 28 or more that we currently have in our 4th grade. The classes would be taught by highly trained teachers and would provide a specialized curriculum

for struggling students. And instead of giving such students just a few hours a week or a few months of help, our proposal would give students a full year of enriched academic and support services.

The instructional program would be tailored for the students who have not gained basic skills with less structured approaches. At the same time, the program would also be specific to the needs of students. For example, it makes no sense to restrict a child to 3rd grade math or making him repeat 3rd grade English reading skills are poor. This is particularly important for English language learners who might be doing better in math than in reading in a language that is unfamiliar to them.

Ed Koch, who was mayor when the city first tried its "gates" program in the 1980s, has praised this approach.

Is intervention - in this or some other form - a better strategy than retention? The Chicago school system, after a seven-year experiment with holding students back, has eased its strict promotion requirements. Why? Because an independent study of the policy has demonstrated that retention alone has not improved student performance.

Taking the 4th grade test Another benefit of the UFT approach is that the conditional 4th graders would take the state's 4th grade test, making it easier to compare the progress of this group with their peers. (Under Mayor Bloomberg's plan, the students who are held back would take the city's 3rd grade test next year.)

While conditional 4th grade classes should help move large



numbers of children out of the lowest level by the end of the school year, other students who are still unsuccessful would be retained in a 4th grade class but with a guarantee that they will receive additional services. We propose that each of those children have an Individual Academic Services Plan, similar to the Individual Education Plan that is used for special education students. They also would receive instruction both before and after school, along with other assistance promised by the chancellor.

The UFT offered this proposal as a way of helping children, and also to quell the cynicism that the process was being rigged to ensure higher test scores for 4th graders next year when the Mayor will be seeking re-election. But we do not think that it is the only approach that could work. Others have also offered thoughtful alternatives. The administration, however, is not interested in listening to any alternatives at this time. In fact, Mayor Bloomberg had to fire two members of his Panel for Educational Policy — engineer the firing of a third member by the Staten Island borough president — to ensure that his plan, and only his plan - got a hearing.

Is our approach expensive? It's probably less expensive than swelling existing 3rd-grade enrollment by 30 percent, which could be the cost of the Department of Education's proposed approach.

Besides, instruction is supposed to determine the budget, not vice versa. Serving the needs of children must be the main concern and driving force behind any educational policy initiative - not politics.

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Deputy chancellor welcomes successor

**Marcia Lyles
fills Farina's
Region 8 spot**

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

Principals, teachers and parents gathered Monday night to bid farewell to one local public education leader and greet another.

Carmen Farina, who earlier this month was appointed second in command to Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, said her goodbyes to Region 8 as she introduced her replacement, Dr. Marcia Lyles.

Farina replaced Diana Lam two weeks ago as the Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning.

Lyles has been teaching in New York City public schools for 20 years and the last month served as the Local Instructional Superintendent for Region 8 and before the system was restructured, as superintendent of District 16, covering parts of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brooklyn.

"I didn't think I was leaving Region 8 not only in good hands, but in better hands," Farina said. "I handed the microphone over to Lyles in public meeting at St. Francis College, on Remsen Street in Brooklyn Heights, March 29.



Carmen Farina, second in command at the Department of Education, introduces her Region 8 replacement, Dr. Marcia Lyles, Monday night.

Districts 13, 14, 15 and 16, including Bedford-Stuyvesant, Park Slope, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Sunset Park, Red Hook, Kensington, Windsor Terrace, Boerum Hill, Downtown Brooklyn, Fort Greene, DUMBO, Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and portions of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights, were merged into Region 8 under Mayor Michael Bloomberg's sweeping upheaval of the city's school system.

Since July, Lyles has supervised elementary, middle and high schools in Region 8 under Farina.

Under the mayor's new system, the 32 former school districts have been consolidated into 10 regional superintendents and guided by one of the 10 regional superintendents. Those regional superintendents oversee a group of local instructional supervisors, who oversee no more than a dozen schools.

Those superintendents are headquartered at 10 new learning support centers located

throughout the city. Lyles has worked as assistant principal at Erasmus Hall High School and principal at Paul Robeson High School, in Crown Heights. Under her leadership Paul Robeson HS was named a Newsweek magazine "America's Best Schools Project Winner" for 2003.

As superintendent of District 16 she created four new middle schools and redesigned professional development for teachers and administrators.

Lyles has taught as an English teacher at Washington Irving High School, in Manhattan, served as an English teacher at Curtis High School in Staten Island, and worked for the superintendent of Brooklyn and Staten Island Schools from 1993-95.

Farina's predecessor, Diana Lam, resigned amid a cloud of controversy after an investigation found she had helped her husband get a job in the department without going through the proper conflict of interest channels.

Farina has been working in

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April 15, 10:00 AM Americana Rest. (Bi-Lingual) 6501 7th Ave. Btwn. 65th & 66th St.	April 16, 10:00 AM Toomey's Diner 252 Empire Blvd. Cross St./Rogers Ave.	April 20, 10:00 AM Lindenwood Diner (Bi-Lingual) 2870 Linden Blvd. Btwn. 78th & Amber St.	April 22, 10:00 AM Mirage Diner 717 Kings Hwy. Cross St./E. 8th St.

Brooklyn	Brooklyn	Brooklyn
April 29, 10:00 AM Vegas Diner 1619 86th St. Cross St./16th Ave.		

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Con Ed shuts Vinegar boiler

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

Residents of Vinegar Hill and DUMBO breathed a sigh of relief this week as Con Edison announced it would be pulling the plug for good on one of the city's most highly polluting power generators.

That generator, known as Boiler 100, is located in Vinegar Hill just a stone's throw from hundreds of residents, a school, and the Farnsworth House, the former residence of artist Mark Rothko.

The controversial generator will be taken out of service in October when a three-year special permit expires on Oct. 1, according to D. Joy Faber, a spokeswoman for Con Edison.

"This is absolutely great news for all of us," said Monique Denonin, vice president of the Vinegar Hill As-

sociation, which has been fighting for years to close the "luny" site.

Located at the Hudson Avenue Station, near the westernmost edge of the Navy Yard, Boiler 100, one of five generators on the site, was built in 1951.

That generator burns oil and produces steam that is pumped into Manhattan. It was considered one of the most polluting power plants in the city before it was taken offline in 1997.

The neighborhoods within a five-mile radius would be most affected by emissions from the plant, according to Lisa Garcia, an attorney for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). Within that radius are Vinegar Hill, DUMBO, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill and Fort Greene.

But following the blackouts that

devastated California in 2001, Con Edison sought a permit to reopen the site using emission credits it had received for closing the facility just four years earlier.

That outraged the community, which argued the company should not be allowed to "new start" and do it again.

After several protests, Con Edison requested the facility with a three-year permit from the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

A spokeswoman for Con Edison said this week that the company would not seek a renewal of the permit and reiterated that the boiler has "always operated in compliance with the DEC guidelines."

This is a major victory for the community," said Garcia, who helped file a lawsuit last year on be-

half of the community to demand that the generator comply with more updated standards.

"It was their pressure that got Con Edison to this point. I think now the pressure needs to stay on Con Edison from the community and elected officials to make sure they do not attempt to restart it," Garcia added.

Some residents said they were skeptical that Con Edison would really keep the generator closed this time, after it made a similar announcement and then reopened it.

Rep. Nydia Velazquez, whose district includes Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn water-

front, has been asking Con Edison to close the generator for years.

"This is great for the community," said Velazquez. "Con Edison's decision to shut down the plant at the end of the temporary, three-year DEC permit will mean closing one of the oldest, dirtiest boilers in the city."

Rachel Gold, chief of staff for

FURMAN...

Continued from page 1

"It would very much like to see a portion of the revenues [from 360 Furman St.] go towards the park maintenance," Brooklyn Heights Councilman David Yassky told The Papers after the property went on sale last summer. Yassky also sent a letter in January, as did the Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition to the Watchtower Society in January, asking that the buyer be required to contribute to the park.

"It is clear that the commitment to create Brooklyn Bridge Park has substantially increased the value of 360 Furman Street," the letter read.

Yassky, who is currently zoned for light manufacturing.

The buyer would have to seek a variance from the city in order to de-

velop the property for any other use.

According to some estimates the religious society, also known as the Jehovah's Witnesses, paid approximately \$10 million for the building in 1983. Built in 1928, the building is currently used for storage, shipping and receiving, and contains 10,000 square feet.

Most of those operations will be consolidated at 117 Adams St., while the group's printing operations are relocating to Wallkill, N.Y.

The Watchtower Society owns 31 buildings in Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO totaling nearly 3 million square feet.

David Yassky, a spokesman for the Watchtower Society, declined to comment on the sale.

Many real estate experts believe converting the property into condos with sweeping views of Manhattan would be most lucrative.

Inside 360 Furman St., columns are spaced about every 20 to 25 feet. Two levels of the building are above ground, and the second, third and fourth floors are connected by a mile-and-a-half of conveyor belts, which transfer books that are to be shipped around the world. Last year alone, 37.5 million pounds of literature and videos were distributed from the Street building to international and domestic locations.

The building is 10 stories high. The building's core holding 14 freight elevators, some big enough to carry 30-foot trucks. Like other Watchtower Society structures, the building is in good shape and has an in-house maintenance crew that regularly paints and cleans it.

"We feel that whatever happens to the building should be sensitive to Brooklyn Bridge Park and reflect the increased value the park will bring to the area," said Janet Person, a spokeswoman for the city Economic Development Corporation.

Person declined to comment on any discussions between the city and the seller and buyer over future use of the building.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation, a spin-off of the Empire State Development Corp., did not return telephone calls seeking comment on the role the building may play in the park.

"To be a good neighbor to Brooklyn Bridge Park, a redeveloped 360

Soons, a spokeswoman for the corporation, said. "To be an outstanding neighbor the developers should contribute funds to the park's development and operation, and provide housing opportunities to low- and middle-income families," Soons added.

New headmaster at Saint Ann's set

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers



The private Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn Heights has announced a successor to its founding headmaster.

Dr. Lawrence Weiss, who for seven years headed the Upper Division of the Horace Mann School in Riverdale, will replace Sister Barbara Worth, 76, who is retiring in the success of the Perpetual Street School.

Bowsworth, who will step down in July, had announced his retirement five months ago.

He played a major role in shaping the 39-year-old institution's creative and far-reaching curriculum, which emphasizes both grades and ranking.

Weiss, 54, has served as the director of the Chinese Studies program at the Sidwell Friends School, in Washington, D.C., where President Bill Clinton's daughter, Chelsea, attended.

He began his career in education as a history teacher at

of experience, richness of intellect, and a commitment to the special qualities that characterize Saint Ann's," said Ann Ash, president of the school's board of the trustees.

The board spent the past five months searching for a headmaster to replace Bowsworth and offer the position to Weiss, who accepted.

Saint Ann's has a student body of 1,067 in pre-school through twelfth-grade.

The non-sectarian school was founded in 1965 with 63 students and seven teachers in the basement of St. Ann's Episcopal Church.

In 1982, the school formally disaffiliated from the church.

Bowsworth, who plans on writing a book, says he will remain on the faculty at the school after his retirement.

He also has one daughter and three grandchildren currently enrolled there.

Asked about the legacy he leaves behind at the school, Bowsworth said: "We've led children into loving school and doing what they do best."



With the city's revenues on the rise, Borough President Marty Markowitz (center) joined members of Brooklyn's City Council delegation at City Hall on Thursday in calling on Mayor Michael Bloomberg to reopen the borough's five firehouses that were closed due to budget cuts.

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MEDICAL CENTER

Target startles burglars

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

When a pair of bold thieves broke into an apartment at Union Street and Fifth Avenue they probably didn't expect to find the owner sitting in the living room.

But that's exactly what they

78 PCT. BLOTTER

encountered when they entered the rear door of the building at 2:35 pm on March 29.

The less-than-dynamic duo turned right around when they

saw the 34-year-old resident bolting back out the door towards Fourth Avenue, police said.

Easy entry

Through the rear window. That's how one thief most likely broke into an apartment on Prospect Park West between 13th and 14th streets, police said.

The window is adjacent to a fire escape and police believe the thief used the opening to both enter and exit the apartment.

The sneaky robber made off with a laptop computer valued at \$1,500 and a Canon Rebel camera valued at \$300.

Visitor hoaxed

A well-heeled Southern woman with a taste for fine leather accessories and pantyhose was out of luck this week when a thief broke into her brand new white Oldsmobile.

The 45-year-old victim from Decatur, Ga., parked her

2004 sedan on St. Johns Place near Sixth Avenue at 9 pm on March 27.

But when she returned at 10 pm, the thief she'd covered the car missing along with a Louis Vuitton purse and wallet, valued at \$895 and \$395, respectively.

The thief also made off with four belts, a perfume, four pairs of shoes and 36 pairs of pantyhose, police said.

Export only

While products at an import-export business usually move in and out, this week they just moved out at one Gowanus office.

The sneaky robber made off with a laptop computer valued at \$2,500 and a CD player worth \$50.

Buyer's remorse

A woman shopping at a Fifth Avenue grocery store got an unpleasant surprise when she went to pay for her goods. The victim, 28, placed her wallet in a shopping cart when she realized she had forgotten her car keys. She then searched somewhere in the store.

Turned to glass

What a pity to trade a luxury automobile for a pile of glass.

But that's exactly what happened to a 35-year-old woman when she parked her car once

Fourth Street.

The motorist left her 2002 BMW there at 8 pm on March 26. But when she returned three hours later, she found nothing but shards of glass where her shining car once

stood.

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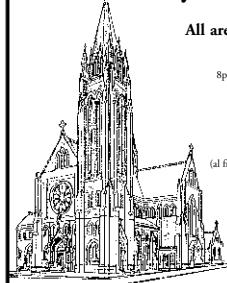
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The Brooklyn Papers' essential guide to the Borough of Kings

April 3, 2004



Deluxe edition

'Accidental Nostalgia' is one sexy, outrageous operetta

By Paulanne Simmons
for The Brooklyn Papers

Cynthia Hopkins' "Accidental Nostalgia," now on stage at St. Ann's Warehouse, is an "outrageous" operetta about the pros and cons of amnesia.

But it is really an exploration of how we create ourselves through what we choose to remember and what we choose to forget.

Hopkins, a Bessie award- and two-time Obie award-winner who has written the book, composed the music and directed the show, stars as Henrietta Bill, a neurologist and author suffering from psychogenic amnesia who sings her way into the dark recesses of her past. (She also plays the accordion, from time to time.)

Hopkins is ably directed by DJ Mendl, who obviously knows how to make the irrational not only understandable, but in some eccentric way, logical.

Returning to her hometown, Henrietta answers various mysteries in her life: Who is her real father? Has she killed him? Is he alive or dead? Has he abused her, and why? She also discovers, after walking down a few

THEATER

"Accidental Nostalgia" plays through April 4, Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. at St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St. Tickets: \$20. Box office: (718) 254-8779. For tickets or more information, call (718) 254-8779 or visit www.artstanns.org or www.Ticketweb.com.

blind alleys — and a trip to Morocco — who she realises she has never been to.

Hopkins' sweet, simple, but highly evocative voice is backed by her all-country band, Gloria Deluxe, composed of trombone and guitar (Curtis Hasselbring); drums (Kristin Mueller); bass (Josh Stark); violin, guitar and spoons (Philippe Thompson); and viola (Karen Waluch).

Gloria Deluxe may have seen their rascous sets at Celebrate Brooklyn, the BAMcafe and Pete's Candy Store.

The music the band plays is a subtle blend of country, blues and jazz, with strains that sound like anything from Kurt Weill to Klezmer. The lyrics have the down-and-out

quality of blues and the piercing poetry of Bob Dylan.

They abound with lines like: "It was like trying to catch a dark cloud with a butterfly net" or "she was like trying to walk across freshly fallen snow without leaving tracks," or "I must have rocks instead of a brain to make the same mistakes again and again I get outta trouble just to get back in."

Although "Accidental Nostalgia" is basically a one-woman show, Hopkins is supported on stage by two footstoms (Jim Findley and Jeff Sugg) dressed in the funky vest-over-bare-chest

attire usually associated with musicians or DJs, or a Bob Fosse revue. They occasionally dance with her, or throw her a change of clothing, or interact with her in a very sensual manner.

Hopkins is also backed by a video screen, created by Jim Findley, with diagrams and pictures displayed on a suspended screen. The video of her father, played by real life dad John Hopkins, reading his explanatory and expletive letter is particularly effective and affecting.

Kristin Lapham and Tara Webb have dressed Hopkins in clothing that is bizarre to say the least. For some reason, she wears kneepads, bandages on her hands and a kind of tunic over a jacket. At one point she strips and stands naked before the audience, then dresses in new clothing, to clearly demonstrate that she has taken on another identity.

It's clear that the doctor is out of her mind.

That she is not alone in her mind, always eclipsing every other aspect of a production. It's too bad this one act of self-indulgence mars an otherwise perfect performance.

In fact, despite the utterly shocking weirdness that characterizes the show, the stage and all of its elements seem perfectly in place and perfectly appropriate. Such is the genius of "Accidental Nostalgia's" conception and execution.

"Accidental Nostalgia" is the kind of theater that does for the stage what the Big Bang did for the universe — create an explosive chain reaction that keeps producing light and life and is capable of infinite transformation.



The doctor is out (of her mind): Hopkins stars as Henrietta Bill, a neurologist suffering from psychogenic amnesia in "Accidental Nostalgia."

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DANCE

It's a 'Mystery'

Longtime dancer and choreographer Lynn Parkerson founded Brooklyn Ballet, in Brooklyn Heights, in 2000. The organization began an active schedule last season, including an educational outreach program, "Elevate," in five Brooklyn schools.

On April 4, Parkerson's company will perform "Mystery Sonatas," inspired by the works of 17th-century composer Heinrich Biber as part of the 92nd Street Y's Harkness Dance Center series.

"I've worked on this piece for two years and shown parts of it before, but this is the first time we're doing the entire hour-long piece [for an audience]," Parkerson explains. "The Q&A session afterwards is a way for me to get valuable feedback. I hope to premiere the whole piece in Brooklyn next season."

Parkerson is the first to admit that Biber's music might seem a strange choice.

"For a long time it had not been played, and then slowly people started to become interested in it again," Parkerson says. "It's a very difficult piece. There are 15 sonata sections, each with a different tuning, so a new arrangement was needed so that the modern violin would not have to be tuned each time." (Gil Morgenstern performs the demanding violin parts.)

Brooklyn Ballet performs "Mystery Sonatas" at the 92nd Street Y, 1295 Lexington Ave., in Manhattan, on April 4 at 3 pm. Tickets are \$10. For more information, visit www.92y.org. — Kevin Filipak



EVENT

Aaaaaaaaaah!

Hold on to your lunches. The iconic Cyclone roller coaster at Astroland Amusement Park in Coney Island will re-open for another season of nerve-unraveling excitement on Sunday, April 4.



Cyclone neophytes, presumably children who are 54-inches tall — the coaster's minimum height requirement — will be allowed to ride for free beginning at noon on Sunday.

Other highlights of the day will include an egg-cream christening of the coaster by Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz at 11:30 am, a performance by the Hungry March Band and face-painters.

Beginning Sunday, Astroland Amusement Park will open at noon, on weekends only, until mid-June, when they'll be open daily, noon to midnight. The Cyclone is located at Surf Avenue at West 10th Street. Tickets to ride the Cyclone are \$5, and \$4 for ride tickets. For more information, call (718) 265-2100 or visit www.astroland.com. — Lisa J. Curtis

ART

Stress free

Now through April 8, "PMS" is on display inside the Brooklyn War Memorial.

The exhibition of artworks — rather than the bloating or mood swings — of "women Painters, Musicians and Sculptors" is a stunningly diverse show.

Among the more than 40 artists whose work is on display are Kristen Bechtel's "TV 2004," a vintage television console with an ant farm — filled with bustling sand harvester ants — behind its screen; (above) as well as Chantia Svetlana's "dioramas of flowers formed from fast food wrappers inset into suitcases, and Carmen Hay Kolodze's colorful textiles which hang above the stage in the exhibition hall.

"PMS" inside the memorial at 195 Cadman Plaza West in Downtown Brooklyn is presented by the Brooklyn College Art Gallery in collaboration with the Brooklyn Arts Council, South of the Navy Yard Artists and the Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition. Admission is free. For more information, call (718) 951-5181.



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Singer Peri Smilow's music joins Passover with civil rights

By Lisa Slein Davis
For The Brooklyn Papers

This is her *hertz*," Peri Smilow says when I visit her in her Park Slope apartment.

The word is Yiddish for "meant to be," and Smilow, 43, an educator and singer-songwriter of contemporary Jewish music, feels destiny has brought her to Brooklyn.

Today, fate has found the perpetually smiling, petite musician home instead of on the road, an anomaly since Smilow's third CD, "The Freedom Music Project: The Music of Passover and the Civil Rights Movement," often has her traveling.

Peri comes home the story of the Jews' exodus from the enslavement of the Egyptians, and a key component of the Seder, the traditional Passover ceremony and dinner, is to remember the plights of other struggling groups. Smilow's own journey has led her to do just that, through music.

CD is a culmination of many years' work in entertainment, education and Jewish spirituality, but it's the first time she's been able to bridge these various worlds.

a doctor, performed regularly in the community theater in her hometown of East Brunswick, N.J., and her mother played piano and danced. For her eighth birthday, her parents bought her a guitar, but no lessons.

"I used to go to the baby-sitters who could play guitar, and after my little sister went to sleep, I would stay up and learn a little from them," said Smilow, who now has a 10-month-old baby of her own who's perfecting her crawl.

Smilow came to New York in the early 1990s to teach in the Head Start and preschool programs for underprivileged children by day. When she realized she cared more about the kids than her audition schedule, she moved to Boston to head an interracial

and intergenerational non-profit group. She earned a master's degree in education from Harvard, and was happy to leave New York.

For fun, she joined a songwriting group that met monthly, and sang for her congregation. As technology changed and home-recording studios grew, Smilow found she could satisfy the requests of her newfound fans, and lay some tracks down for her first album, "Songs of Peace," came out in 1993, and included four of her own songs.

"It was amazing," says Smilow. "People began to call and say, 'Hey, do you do concerts'?"

And suddenly, if it fated to be, a following career was born. The only problem was her educational career was still in the swing.

"I was working 60 or 70 hours a week, and then on nights and weekends, I would go to a concert, changing into

panthothe while trying to steer. She realized that entertainment — albeit Jewish spiritual entertainment — had

Snailow is not the first artist to take on contemporary Jewish music — music that marries the sounds of modern folk, like Joan Baez or James Taylor, to the spiritual presence and liturgy of Judaism. There's Debbie Friedman, who also has a line of CDs, and Smilow's own "The Freedom Music Project," mixing Passover tunes with black spirituals.

"But I'm different in that I focus on issues of social justice," says Smilow. "I talk about politics. I encourage the Jewish community to reach out."

In 1996, Smilow teamed up with Minister Lester Hirsch, of the New Covenant Christian Church in Moshassuck, Mass., to provide music for the Anti-Defamation League's annual Black-Jewish Seder in Boston. When she had

Hampton and his family over to dinner, he told her he had lived in Boston for 20 years and had not once been in the house of a white person.

Smilow, a self-taught songwriter, in some very fundamental ways. Smilow says sadly, but adds that she found music was a way to move integration forward. "It became apparent through the music that the two communities had more in common than they thought."

Hirsch and Smilow joined together the "Freedom Music Project," mixing Passover tunes with black spirituals. The 10 songs range from "Wade in the Water" to "Avadim Hayinu (Once we were slaves, now we are free)." She was finally able to join her disparate worlds of spirituality and social justice.

Fast enough, Smilow had to New York when she married NY 1 newscaster and fellow folk singer Bob Miskin, and now the buffet table in their railroad apartment is crammed with pictures of



Common ground: Park Slope singer-songwriter Peri Smilow brings black and Jewish communities together with her contemporary Jewish folk music.

MUSIC

Peri Smilow's CDs, "The Freedom Music Project: The Music of Passover and the Civil Rights Movement" and "Ashrei" and "Songs of Peace" (Sign of the Dove Music) are available at www.brooklynpapers.com or by calling (800) 950UND9. For more information, visit www.perismilow.com.

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the Smilow-Miskin clan.

Of late, she is designing "Concert-in-a-Box," a 10-week program to bring artists and their audiences together through spiritual music. The groups not only sing together, they have a list of suggested activities, including having one another over for dinner.

Can that program apply to our very own Brooklyn, where blacks and Jews have had a long and storied history of confrontation and neighborhood strife? Crown Heights? Maybe, says Smilow.

"What you need to make change is to have areas of common interest," she says. "Music is one way that can happen."

Although Smilow performs around the country, destiny has not handled her a concert in Brooklyn — but she wants one.

Says Smilow, "All I need is an invitation."

Pints & phantoms

'The Weir' cast shares great stories over brews

By Paulanne Simmons
for The Brooklyn Papers

Conor McPherson's "The Weir," with its spine-tingling ghost stories told in a rural Irish pub, allows the Gallery Players to show off what they do best: provide top-notch acting and create a masterpiece of suspense.

Set designer Todd McRae has recreated a typical Irish pub that's perfect down to the lace window curtains and Irish flag beneath the television. And Heather Siobhan Curran directs a top-notch cast that makes the spoken word a joy to listen to.

And that is especially important here, as Curran makes a valiant effort to keep her actors moving in a play that basically has no action, or plot. The cast was mastered the Irish accent and Gaelic mannerisms so well they might have been born in County Sligo. Stone. But there is probably nothing that can be done with McPherson's work to make it play.

"The Weir" is about four pub regulars: Jim (Joshua Beavans), Brendan (Mike Durkin), Declan (John Blaylock) having grown a beard and shed the English accent he is so often called upon to use in Gallery Players productions, who regularly pass the time and quench their thirst at a local pub, in an isolated town where there doesn't seem to be anyone else.

When Jim, a wealthy businessman and property owner, brings over a woman named Valerie (Brooke Delaney), who has just bought a house from him, the men exchange their idle gossip and harmless barrage of insults for the telling of tall tales.

They do this with an eloquence, a



Easy being green: John Blaylock, Brooke Delaney, Patrick Toon and Mike Durkin in the Gallery Players production of "The Weir," which is set in an Irish pub.

THEATER

The Gallery Players production of "The Weir" runs through April 11. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$22 for seniors and children under 12. The Gallery Players is located at 141 St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Park Slope. For more information, call 782-9547 or visit www.gallery-players.com.

the compassion, friendship and common decency in all four men.

In an exceedingly laudatory review, Fergie McGillicuddy called the London production of "The Weir," a "darkly magical, lyrical little play with no

plot to speak of beyond the transforming effects of the spoken word."

Apparently he didn't mind this lack of plot. Neither did the respondents to The Royal National Theatre's survey which asked theatergoers to name the 10 most significant plays of the 20th century, from "Othello" to "Death of a Salesman," the London Evening Standard, which gave McPherson its Most Promising Playwright award. And when the production moved to a theater on England's West End, it won the 1999 Tony Award for Best Play.

But this reviewer did mind. And possibly, American audiences did, too.

"The Weir" opened at the Walter Kerr Theatre on April 1, 1999 and closed seven months later, after 277 performances, exactly a steady run.

A weir is a dam and a dam can either hold water or let it come forth, sometimes as a powerful flood. In McPherson's play the weir metaphorically breaks and lets loose a flood of words that sets free the emotions each storyteller had kept bottled up — sometimes.

But after the stories are over, as beautifully rendered as they are, one does not get the feeling that much has changed. No new decisions have been made, no old ones broken. No one has changed his mind or resolved to take new steps. There is no final word of advice and everyone leaves to go home.

Perhaps at a time when we are saturated with the meaningless dialogue of television sitcoms and blockbuster movies, when films can sweep the Academy awards without winning a single award for acting, many may think it enough for a play to have good dialogue delivered well and with feeling.

But we have a right to demand more of our playwrights. We have a right to demand vision. We have a right to demand improvement. We have a right to demand problems, and alternatives if not solutions.

"The Weir" is a wonderfully executed production. It is a sheer pleasure to watch every one of these talented actors. But at the end of the play, one may wish they were given a little more to say.

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The New York Times
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Hundreds rally to protest Ratner plan



Katie Weity, 31, shouts her opposition to Bruce Ratner's development plans at Sunday's rally.



Hundreds showed up for the "Rally at the Railyards," on Pacific Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues Sunday.



Jon Crow holds a sign protesting Ratner's proposal to build towers in Prospect Heights.



At rally, 1-year-old Skye Rothstein, of Dean Street, whose family would be evicted by arena plan.

On site, chants of 'No eminent domain for personal gain'

By Jotham Sederstrom
The Brooklyn Papers

Chanting "No eminent domain for personal gain," hundreds of protesters gathered in Prospect Heights Sunday, within three-point range of the site planned for a professional basketball arena that has been mightily opposed since it was proposed by developer Bruce Ratner last year.

The rally, at the "railyards," drew more than 500 people to a stretch of Pacific Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues which, under current plans, would be de-mapped and resurfaced as roughly center court for the New Jersey Nets, the NBA team that Ratner purchased in January.

Community leaders and elected officials who oppose the plan to build an arena, office towers and high-rise residential towers in a swath of the neighborhood extending east from the intersection of Flatbush and Atlantic avenues, banded together Sunday afternoon to voice their opposition.

The \$2.5 billion Atlantic Yards development relies on the state's condemnation of private property that would force the relocation of 350 residents and 250 employees of the business units that will be built over Long Island Rail Road storage yards at the north end of the site.

Among some 15 speakers who rallied against the project, Councilwoman Letitia James, clearly pleased with the

turnout, incited the crowd's vigor with a plea that veered toward call-and-response.

In response to her shouts of "No eminent domain for personal gain," supporters choraled "Brooklyn." When she yelled "No justice, no peace, whose streets?" the crowd dutifully echoed her rallying cry.

"We stand with you, Mr. Ratner," said James, who has been a vocal opponent of the plan since its conception. "And when you said there were only a few voices, you were clearly wrong."

As some 15 invited officials, including state Sen. Velmanette Montgomery and Rep. Major Owens, an eclectic group of musicians echoed the call for opposition with lyrics tailor-made to the rally.

The Jaybirds, a Prospect Heights-based three-piece fea-

turing guitar, mandolin and accordion, performed "Don't Tear Us Down." Led by Sam Zygmuntowicz, the group played for 45 minutes, earning the prolonged applause of a crowd that came and went as the afternoon turned brisk.

"Maybe someday you'll be part of a crowd that's so high towers fill the sky," sang Zygmuntowicz, a violinist from Dean Street who would be relocated by the plan. "Would anyone remember that the big sports dome was built on the spot?"

Many attending the rally were tenants, homeowners and merchants who said their buildings would be condemned under the arena proposal.

The gathering moved Israel Amador, who said that he has

lived in a building on Dean Street for 35 years. As he mouthed rallying cries by Norman Siegel, the former head of the New York City Liberties Union who is a resident threatened with eviction in a planned lawsuit, Amador admitted that the rally was a first for him.

"It's nice to see something like this before," he said while standing next to a friend. "This is something, I think, that's kind of special."

Speaking first, the Rev. David Dyson, of the Layoyer Avenue Methodist Church, told the crowd that upon learning of Ratner's plans he looked up a definition of eminent domain. He remarked that the provision of law that allows the government to take private property for the public good, is normally used to make space for such public facilities as hospitals, schools, parks and roadways, not private.

"They didn't say nothin' about a basketball arena," said Dyson, a self-proclaimed activist since 1972 who had alongside Cesar Chavez, the California migrant workers organizer, "seen that this is not so much eminent domain as it is imperial domain."

Although Ratner didn't attend the rally, a spokeswoman at the event on Sunday passed along a statement that he promised continued community involvement as the plan proceeds. In the statement, Bruce Bender, executive vice president of Ratner's Forest City Ratner Co., said that the developer would create 25,000 jobs, of which 15,000 would be

temporary construction jobs. He also stated that 4,500 units of mixed-income housing would be created.

"I understand that there are concerns in parts of the community and it has always been one of our guiding principles to listen to and learn from the community and work toward minimizing the impact that it may have," said Bender in a statement, which was handed out just before the rally began.

Asked for a comment on the event itself, a Ratner spokesman, Beth Gitterman, declined, saying, "We have no further comment on the rally."

Despite an energetic crowd which included children and at least a dozen anti-development dogs, who clad in sweaters sprawled with protest slogans, the rally was intermittently clouded with sadness.

Simon Liu, the owner of a canvas-stretching business on Dean Street, sang an operatic version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" before breaking down in tears before the crowd. He had warned onlookers that he might cry and when he did, several friends, including Paul Hagan, president of Prospect Heights Action Coalition, hugged him as he descended the stage.

Twenty minutes later, Hagan fought back tears as she read an essay written by 10-year-old Nestor Gutman, whose relatives would be displaced under the arena plan.

"Rorts will be torn from the ground," she read from Roman's essay, "not giving future children the opportunity to know some great history of a special part of Brooklyn."

MTA seeks as much money as it can get ... from Ratner

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

Metropolitan Transportation Authority Chairman Peter Kalikow said this week he would seek "maximum value" for an 11-acre Long Island Rail Road storage yards site in Prospect Heights — over which developer Bruce Ratner is looking to build a colossus arena complex.

During the meeting, Prospect Heights residents opposed to the arena plan, many of whom would be forced to be uprooted by the MTA chief for the project, put a public bidding process and seek community input before handing it to Ratner.

The developer is an old law school buddy of the man who appointed MTA board, Gov. George Pataki.

Ratner's plan would require seizing more than two square blocks of private land south of the rail yards and de-mapping and destroying approximately 500 residents and businesses.

His \$300 million bid for the

proposals on the site, Kalikow said, "I don't know."

Opponents of the plan accused Ratner of having a "backdoor deal" with the MTA to purchase the MTA chief for the project.

The MTA has a history of closed books and no oversight," said Daniel Goldstein, a resident of 636 Pacific St., a nine-story luxury apartment building that would be razed to make way for the project.

Goldstein attended the board meeting along with several opponents of the plan.

Questions about such deals between the MTA and Ratner first surfaced last year when an MTA spokesman incorrectly told The

Brooklyn Papers on three different occasions that Ratner had already paid the MTA \$100 million to do over the strongest opposition.

The spokesman later said that he had made a mistake and that Ratner did not hold the rights.

But speaking at a buildings trade conference in Manhattan earlier this week, Ratner mocked the MTA for "suspicion" his plan.

"The MTA has been wonderful in supporting both projects," Ratner said, referring to both his plan and a plan to build a new football stadium for the New York Jets on Manhattan's West Side.

The MTA said it has not received an application to review the plan.

Frank Gehry, known for designing the Guggenheim Bilbao, in Spain, is the 7.7-million-square-foot development.

Frank Gehry, known for designing the Guggenheim Bilbao, in Spain, is the 7.7-million-square-foot development.



Patti Hagan, of the Prospect Heights Action Coalition, at the MTA meeting on Wednesday.

Poll: NYers won't pay for arenas

Associated Press

A majority of New York City voters don't want their tax dollars to go toward two proposed sports facilities, one for the basketball Nets in Brooklyn and another for the football Jets on Manhattan's West Side, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released Thursday.

However, 75 percent of respondents said they would support the building of a basketball arena in Brooklyn if no tax money were used; 59 percent opposed using tax money for the arena.

On the plan for a football stadium in Manhattan, 60 percent opposed it, while 39 percent said they would support a stadium if the tax money came from higher tax revenue in the surrounding neighborhood.

"Nets yes! Jets no!" New Yorkers love the idea of Nets basketball in Brooklyn, if they don't have to pay for the arena," said Maurice Carroll, director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. "But they oppose the Jets stadium, even if they can be convinced to do so by raising their taxes."

The poll also found that 85 percent of New Yorkers supported extending the No. 7 subway line to the far West Side if it can be done without raising taxes.

In response to a question on whether they supported Mayor Michael Bloomberg's plan to end social promotions for third graders, 63 percent said they approved of the idea, while 30 percent said they disagreed.

56 percent said they didn't like the way Bloomberg fired two education panel members who disagreed with him on the plan, and 45 percent said they disagreed with Bloomberg's handling of the city's schools.

Forty-two percent said they backed the way the mayor deals with public school education, the poll found.

The poll, conducted between March 23 and March 29, surveyed 1,159 New York City registered voters. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.

Institute off chopping block?

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

A week after the City Planning Commission hosted a public hearing on the Downtown Brooklyn Plan, it is continuing making two more changes, according to sources.

Those changes would include saving an architectural college and removing from the plan's consideration a plot of land at Flatbush and Atlantic avenues that developer Bruce Ratner is looking to construct the tallest of his Atlantic Yards office towers.

As part of the Downtown Brooklyn Plan, the city seeks to convert 1,000 residential units and 100 businesses.

Included among those is the Institute of Design and Construction, a nearly 60-year-old college at the corner of Flatbush Avenue Extension and Williamsburg Street.

The school would be razed to create clearer sight lines from Flatbush Avenue Extension to a 1.5-acre open space — Williamsburg Square — which city plans to build across the street.

But the school may be saved, according to Dolly Williams, Borough President Marty Markowitz's appointee to the 13-member City Planning Commission, which is currently reviewing the mas-

sive Uniform Land Use Review Panel.

Williams, who was not present at the hearing, recommended the school and putting the money slated for its condemnation into restoring area parks.

The City Planning Commission is scheduled to vote on the massive rezoning and urban re-

newal plan, which involves 22 sites, on May 14.

On April 26, at 1 p.m., the commission will discuss the plan at a public review session hosted at its Lower Manhattan office at 22 Reade St.

The commission has the authority to modify, approve in-

or disapprove the plan be-

fore it is sent to the City Council.

Vincent Battista, president of the design college, said he will believe the school is to be saved when he "sees it in writing."

Even if the three-story col- lege is spared in this go-around, he said, its future would still be

far less than certain since the city intends to extend the time-frame for the urban renewal area in which it sits for another 40 years.

"We would have this hanging over us for 40 years," Battista said, explaining that the city could still swoop in at any time and condemn the property.

According to sources close to the plan, the planning commission is also in considering removing a triangular parcel of land at the intersection of Atlantic and Williamsburg streets to build a 620-foot tower. That skyscraper, designed by architect Frank Gehry, is part of his Atlantic Yards plan, a \$2.5 billion residential and office complex centered around a basketball arena to house his newly purchased New Jersey Nets.

The site is the only parcel of land included in both the Downtown Brooklyn and Atlantic Yards plans, and it where Ratner would build the tallest of his Gehry-designed structures.

That has troubled Prospect Heights Councilwoman Letitia James and other elected officials and residents who believe that the entirety of the two plans should either be looked at as one or as completely separate.

James last week called on the city to remove Ratner's parcel from the Downtown Plan.



Vincent Battista, 58, president of the Institute of Design and Construction, stands in front of the school's building at 141 Willoughby St. The building may be spared from the city's Downtown Plan, which would have demolished it.

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